1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

342 porary winter use. In summer such camps rarely contain heating appliances but in winter a stove is always used. Food, clothing, and bedding are commonly stored at the sides and back of a wall tent.

361 Since the dwelling forms so far described are often temporary and frequently moved,
342 the Indians have, to a considerable extent, systematized the procedure of making camp. Either a man or woman may set up camp; sometimes both cooperate in the task. The first
[514 objective is to find a level piece of ground. Former campsites are generally avoided as is the
515] brush close to such a site, since this area has probably been used for toilet purposes. If the site selected is not already free of underbrush, it is cleared. The branches are cut off close to the ground and the stumps dug out. Next poles must be found. Poplar saplings, which are naturally provided with strong forks at convenient intervals, are preferred as supports for the ridge pole. The ridge pole is generally a slim, straight, red spruce. After these poles have been cleaned of branches, and, in the case of the ridge pole, of rough bark, they are transported to the camp site. The front and rear poles, designed to support the ridge pole, are here sharpened with an ax. In this process the circular trunk is tapered to a point by being axed on four surfaces. The pole is then thrust into the ground until firmly anchored. The tent is slipped over or tied to the ridge pole and the latter fitted into the forked supports.

Camp making presents different problems in a spruce forest lacking poplar. Spruce trees do not have strong forking branches. Hence, instead of being supported in a forked stick, the rear of the ridge pole is sometimes lashed or nailed to a conveniently located spruce tree while in front of the tent two spruce saplings are crossed, thrust into the ground, and lashed. The ridge pole is then placed into the crotch. In winter, when the ground is frozen, a tent is erected with poles which are simply crossed and lashed without being anchored in the ground.

● 352 After the tent is erected, the ground inside the dwelling and immediately in front of the entrance is covered with spruce brush. The brush is placed with the thicker end of the branches extending in one direction—either toward the back or side of the tent. Subsequent branches are partially thrust under the brush already laid.

512 During fair weather, if people stop traveling in the early part of the day, tents are not erected until nearly nightfall. Fire, however, is made immediately and sometimes brush is put down to make sitting on the ground more comfortable.

342 *Tent frames.* We come now to relatively more permanent shelters. A tent frame consists essentially of a four or five strip wall tent set inside four walls made of horizontal poles. The walls are a little over two feet high and usually contain a door. In summer, tent frames of lumber are sometimes used in Lower Post but generally tent frames are made of logs and used primarily as winter dwellings by a family which lacks a cabin. They are usually constructed by men; a widow, however, may build her own tent frame. The following observations give the procedure followed in tent frame construction.

9:23:45 (Old Man's Place). Hans Donnelly used green jackpine poles, averaging about four inches in diameter, for his tent frame. He cut the poles about one-eighth of a mile from the campsite and packed them home on his shoulder. His brother Donald (14) fitted the poles and put them in place. The corners were joined in bowl shaped trenches which were chinked with moss

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

342 the heavy roof. The first, or auxiliary, pair of ridge poles is put in position after the last log has been laid along the length of the building and another along the width. This width log, as well as all subsequent ones added above it, is cut more narrowly than the underlying logs. Two ridge poles, as well as the center ridge log, project about two feet in front of the building and thus provide support for the foreward eaves. The width logs, on which the first pair of ridge poles is laid, project about three or four feet on the outside of the building. On these projections are placed two lengthwise running logs used as braces to support the roof poles and the packed dirt, which is generally used for roofing. In the older type of log cabin this point of construction is somewhat complex and is illustrated in Figure 4, B.

When the central ridge pole is in position, the roofing is begun. Where lumber is not available, poles, five or six inches in diameter, are hewed on what will constitute the interior face and set close together on the ridge poles. The bottom ends of these roof poles rest on the brace logs previously described and illustrated. Sometimes split poles are used in roofing. Harry Lang's cabin contains forty-five logs, or a total of ninety split poles. The old type cabin illustrated, contains sixty-eight spruce poles, 6'5" long, lightly hewed on their inner face. A square hole is left to accommodate the stovepipe, and the roof is then covered with moss. Dirt, to a depth of about six inches, is then piled on the moss and packed firm. Instead of a pole and dirt roof, a piece of eight ounce canvas is sometimes used for roofing. If a mill sawed lumber is used for the roof, it is covered with a double layer of roofing paper. Older cabins may be floored with split and hewed poles. Today floors of mill sawed lumber are the rule. Line cabins are usually floorless, the ground being covered with spruce brush.

Cabins are chinked after construction is completed. Chinking consists of moss or mud applied from the outside of the building while on the interior the spaces between the poles are stuffed with moss, old clothing, or sawdust. On both the interior and exterior walls, wide gaps between the logs are sometimes chinked with thin spruce saplings nailed in place. To add further protection from wind and drafts, wrapping paper and cardboard are nailed against the inside walls. Windows are all purchased readymade in Lower Post and transported to the settlements. A home cabin can be completed in about ten days, if two or three men are available for the work. A smaller line cabin can be built in two or three days by two [462] men. Housebuilding is always done by men.

Sentiment generally favors a house to an open camp. On the other hand, some older people are reluctant to move into a house before the weather turns really cold. Mrs. Man wanted to remain in a tent as long as possible and not hole herself up "like a bear."

Only rarely are cabins dismantled and moved to a new site. Occasionally cabins, which have not been kept in good repair, are wrecked after a new cabin has been constructed.

[527] The completion of a new house is sometimes marked by a drinking party. In Lower Post, River Joe celebrated the completion of his house with a dance. Men who built cabins expressed strong pride in their achievements. Nick Lang, who was building a large house in Lower Post told the writer: "First time pretty hard; next time, by God, easy!"

●352 *Furnishings.* A limited amount of furniture is found in cabins and houses; less in tent frames. A tent contains no furniture other than a stove in winter.

Home cabins and tent frames may contain a table, simple benches, and sometimes a

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

bunk, besides a cook stove and an airtight heater. In Lower Post, houses often contain single cots acquired from construction camps along the Alaska Highway. At least one family in each settlement usually owns a radio which is not, however, always in working order. Shelves consist of wooden packing boxes nailed with their backs to the log walls. Food, clothing, and other equipment is piled on the floor, stored under bunks, or suspended from poles stretching across the width of a cabin.

Away from Lower Post practically all furniture is locally manufactured out of hand hewed poplar or whipsawed spruce. Besides benches, spruce tree sections, ten or twelve inches in diameter and eighteen inches high, also serve as seats.

A cabin or camp often presents an untidy picture of a great many articles stored in any available space. Old Kean's tent frame presented an extreme picture of disorder. Here the tables were littered with tins of jam, butter, syrup, half used packages of macaroni, and other food left over from several meals. Food was stored under the tables and even in the center of the floor. The bunks were piled with guns, clothing, tarps, and miscellaneous objects.

Griffin has described the interior and furnishings of one of the older cabins in Lower Post (perhaps Mrs. Dickson's house) as he saw it during April 1943. " . . . we go into one of the cabins, stooping to pass the low doorway and straining our eyes in the dim light. Beyond a bed in one corner and a stove in another there is little in the place. The woman sitting on the bed regards us apathetically, but the eyes of the boy beside her are bright and full of curiosity. Two men are bent over some pelts laid out on the floor, marten and lynx. Hudson asks them what the trapping was like this winter and one of them replies laconically, "No good. Too cold."[7]

In summer, bedding consists of a single sleeping bag or a pair of heavy woolen blankets. In winter a second sleeping bag may be used or additional blankets. Bunks are sometimes covered with dry grass. Some families have acquired single size camp mattresses from construction camps. In daytime, when people sleep on the ground in cabins or tents, the bedding is rolled into a huge roll and stored in the rear of the dwelling where it becomes a backrest for the occupants.

In winter, spruce brush is laid in front of the entrance to a cabin or tent frame, or a burlap bag is thrown immediately inside the door of a house. Here a person scrapes the snow from his moccasins before the warmth of the building causes the melting snow to wet his footwear.

Cabins with floors are swept every day or so with a broom. New brush is laid in tents and floorless cabins about once every two weeks, the old branches being discarded. Every fall cabins are rechinked where necessary and additional sod may be piled on the shallow spots of a dirt roof. Heavy snow is removed from the roof of a sod cabin and from the tops of tents. Cleaning and chinking are done by women, while a man keeps the roof in repair. If tents burn or otherwise become damaged, a woman takes down the shelter and sews a new piece of canvas into the damaged area.

Mice are household pests. Dwellings often contain mousetraps, most of which are of native manufacture. To make a mousetrap, a man takes a piece of wood, fifteen inches long,

[7] Griffin, *Alaska and the Canadian Northwest* (1944), 127.

Blankets

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Blankets and bedding for lying on consisted of all kinds of large or hairy skins sometimes sewed together, caribou, moose, bear, goat, sheep (caribou, bear and sheep most commonly used). Buffalo was used long ago before they became extinct in Tahltan country. All kinds of robes were used as covering.

CEREMONIAL AND DANCING CLOTHING

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Every one aimed to dress in his or her best at all gatherings, feasts, dances, celebrations and ceremonial affairs. The clothes worn by some were merely Tahltan clothes of a fancy kind, viz., the best a person had as to newness, cleanness and richness of ornamentation. Most people had some garments of good quality on which considerable labor had been expended in fancy work, and some pieces exhibited the best art of the tribe in quill work, bead work and other ornamentation. These garments were kept for holidays and special occasions. However, most of the ceremonial clothing was of Tlingit type, and a great deal of it was procured ready made from the Tlingit. I did not try to get particulars regarding this class of clothing as it does not really belong to the Tahltan culture. Chief among this kind of clothing may be mentioned the so-called Chilcat blanket. All the wealthiest Tahltan acquired blankets of this kind from the Tlingit, which were used by them on ceremonial occasions. A kind of apron or skirt and a kind of shirt or coat, all of similar materials and weaves were also in use. Some cloaks or mantles and capes of Tlingit manufacture were also used; also short leggings with horizontal fringes, belts, necklaces and many kinds of head dresses. Among the latter may be mentioned the North Coast head-dress set with sea-lion whiskers, having a carved mask in front and a train of ermine skins behind. These were used by men.

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Blue woolen blankets and cloaks bordered with red cloth and ornamented with pearl buttons or with shells became very common in later days. Sometimes the buttons were arranged so as to form realistic figures of animals, etc. They were used by both sexes. Among what seems to have been head wear of their own manufacture were fur caps and headbands of fur and occasionally of embroidered leather, some having pendants of skin fringes set with feathers in various fashions. (See Nat. Mus. specimens Nos 28, 29, 30, 31, 32.) There were also different kinds of caps made of red and other cloth also decorated in various ways

Hammocks Hammocks were commonly used in the lodge by the Tahltan, and as far as current tradition goes are as ancient as the carriers already described. They consisted of a piece of strong moose or caribou leather suspended by two parallel ropes of rawhide or babiche. The edges of the skin forming the sides of the hammock were stitched down over the ropes, enclosing them loosely. The hammock was kept stretched by sticks placed crossways between the two ropes, preventing the latter from coming too closely together. These sticks generally had notches in the ends to prevent their slipping off the ropes. The hammock was arranged for height to suit the convenience of the mother in attending the child. Babies were swung to sleep in these hammocks. At the present day blanket or canvas is generally used instead of skins and tump ropes instead of rawhide etc. 352

Infancy And Childhood Children were suckled often for a period of two or three years, when they were able to eat almost all kinds of food. Young children were fed the most tender parts of meat picked for them by their elders, but at an early age all attention of this kind was neglected and the child helped itself to whatever it could eat. Some mothers at first masticated food for their children. Children learned through observation and were also taught by their elders. Mothers generally 853 861

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard

piled snow high all around the central space. The warmth of the fire caused the snow to freeze, a condition that insured better protection from wind. At other times people dug into a snowbank to fashion an overnight shelter. Snow shovels were not widely used among the Liard River Indians, so that people moved more with the aid of snowshoes. A snowhouse contained a fire, the smoke of which escaped through a hole in the roof.

In summer threat of an enemy attack led the people to excavate pits near the camp where young children could be secreted and covered with caribou hides (possibly camouflaged with earth?). Birch-bark, semisubterranean, and grass-mat houses remained unidentified by informants. Log cabins commenced to enjoy popularity after the introduction of the steel ax following white contact. Skin-covered tipis are said to have been introduced by a Fort Liard family. It is interesting to note that while anthropological thinking might classify together the sod- and skin-covered conical lodge Indians tend to distinguish them sharply.

Appurtenances remained scarce in aboriginal dwellings. Spruce brush or grass provided floor covering, the grass first being softened by rubbing between the hands. People especially favored grass for sleeping places. Raised platforms did not find a place in houses and stuffed pillows are also denied. Sleepers lay covered by robes of woven rabbit or ground-hog skins or blankets containing a number of beaver and marten pelts sewn together. Drifted snow and other debris were brushed away from dwellings with a willow broom.

Other than the cache, non-residential structures were represented only by the sudatory, which was built over ground that had been excavated to a depth of about 12 inches. Atop the excavated space, willow poles were bent and lashed together, following which a sheathing of tanned skins went over the framework. A hole for ventilation opened in the top of the dome. Sweat houses contained no entry, the user simply lifting the lower edge of the cover when he wished to enter or leave. Hot rocks doused with water furnished steam as well as a heat so intense that the bather might be driven to lift a corner of the cover to admit cool air. Ceremonial structures found no place in the Kaska settlement and even the brush enclosed dance or ceremonial plaza appears to have been lacking.[4]

The efficiency of any dwelling in winter depended closely on fire. Heat also constituted a prerequisite for many technological operations, ranging from cooking to snowshoe making. Two versions of a common myth explaining the origin of fire (or rather of pyrites) are given below.

One fellow [Bear?] had this rock and didn't want to give it to the Indians. He wanted to keep it. Another fellow stole the stone and gave it to Fire Man who ran away. Tsagaye [a culture hero] secured the rock and made fire with it. Then he threw the rock all around, all over the country, so that everybody could have fire (JC).

Crow and Wolf held a meeting. This took place before there were any people in the world. Crow had been in the habit of flying around and when any animal killed meat he would be on hand to take some

[4] Honigmann, *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave* (1946), 89; Original, *Contributions to the Ethnography of the Kaska* (1954), 51, 122, 125.